

People Practices And Talent Management



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Differentiating Star Performers From Average Performers: A 360 Degree Feedback Perspective.



“Do Star Performers perform better than Average Performers on the managerial and leadership roles and activities expected from top management?”

Do star Performers necessarily demonstrate more of a Developmental Style of Leadership compared to the rest (average performers)?

Do Star Performers exhibit more positive leadership & managerial qualities as compared to average performers?”



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About the Author...

Dr. Raju Rao is a postgraduate in Personnel Management and Industrial relations from XLRI Jamshedpur (1994 Batch) and a Ph. D. in Management from M.S. University of Baroda (2008). He has more than two decades of rich experience in the field of HRD. His areas of specialization include HRD Audit, 360-Degree Feedback, Performance Management Systems, Competency mapping and Assessment Development Centers. He has been trained exclusively in Psychological testing (MBTI) and consulting interventions at NTL, Bethel (USA). He can be contacted at rajurao@hotmail.com

These are the key questions that the extensive study conducted by Dr. Raju Rao aimed to answer. This article is based on the study and aims to explore the differences in the 360 degree feedback profiles of ‘star’ and ‘average performers’ using the RSDQ Model of leadership.

360 Degree Feedback-A Powerful Tool For Leadership Development
One of the most popular management and leadership development tools of recent times is 360 Degree Feedback. It is said that almost every fortune 500 organization uses 360 Degree. Many organizations have been found to use 360DF as a leadership development tool.

“The 360 degree feedback process involves collecting perceptions about a person’s behavior and the impact of that behavior from the person’s superior group, direct reports, colleagues, fellow members of project teams, internal and external customers, and suppliers.” (Lepsinger, 1997, p. 6). Hence, 360 Degree Feedback is a systematic and anonymous collection of feedback on a particular individual’s performance. The tool or instrument used is referred to as the 360 DF Tool and RSDQ™ is a model of leadership developed by TVRLS.

The 360 Degree Feedback Instrument (360DF) and RSDQ Model

In any organization, every individual’s performance is an outcome of transactions with others, internal or external to company, and can be broadly categorized into five main sections:

1. Interaction the individual has with himself i.e. working independently
2. Interaction with various functional managers, but a one-on-one interaction
3. Interaction with groups or more than two individuals; where the individual may be interacting with a whole team, department or even unit
4. Individuals interact with the organization at the level of policy changes
5. Lastly, the external environment and even economy of a country can cause or affect individuals through the organizations.

RSDQ model (Roles, Styles, Delegation and Qualities) is a model developed by TVRLS for Management in terms of managerial and leadership competencies. This model of leadership and managerial effectiveness views effective management and leadership as a combination of four sets of variables (Pareek and Rao, T. V, 2003). These are:



ROLES: There are a number of roles, which have to be played by every manager in order to be effective managers. These are both transformation roles (leadership roles) and transactional roles (managerial). Some of these are:

1. Articulating and communicating vision and values
2. Formulating long-term policies and strategies
3. Introducing and managing new technology and systems
4. Inspiring, developing and motivating juniors
5. Culture building
6. Internal customer management
7. External customer management
8. Boss Management
9. Team work and team building
10. Managing unions and associations.

An instrument consisting of 55 items was developed to assess these roles & measure the extent to which the manager is perceived as performing these roles.

(LEADERSHIP)

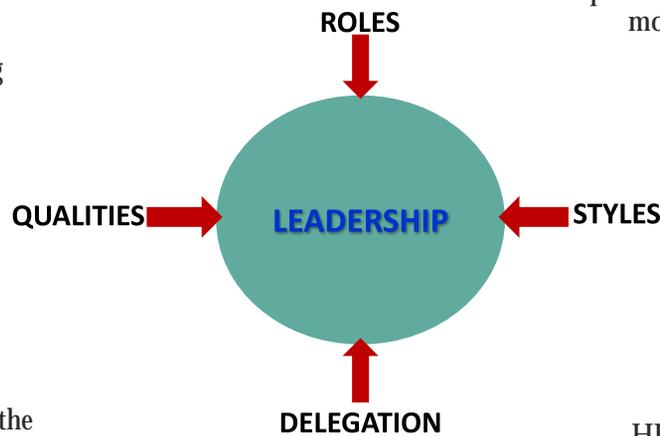
STYLES: It is not only the roles or activities that determine effectiveness but also the way in which they are played. The RSDQ model envisages that managers may play most roles well, devote time and effort but could be insensitive to the style with which they carry out these activities. Styles could be broadly classified into the following 3:

Benevolent or Paternalistic leadership style in which the top level manager believes that all his employees should be constantly guided, treated with affection like a parent treats his children, shares

information with those who are close to him, etc.

Critical leadership style is characterized as closer to the Theory X belief pattern, where the manager believes that employees should be closely and constantly supervised, directed, works strictly according to norms, rules and is highly discipline oriented etc.

Developmental leadership style is an empowering style, where the top manager believes in developing the competencies of staff, treats them as mature adults, is long term goal oriented, shares information, facilitates the resolution of conflicts and mistakes by the employees themselves etc.



Developmental style of Leadership is the most desired organization building style. The instrument based on the RSDQ model, assesses the extent to which the above mentioned styles are exhibited across 10 different situations or activities and the impact the person makes on his subordinates.

DELEGATION: The Delegation section of the questionnaire assesses the extent to

which the participant is delegating and releasing his own time for higher level roles and tasks. The ten-items in this questionnaire measure the various symptoms of delegation

QUALITIES: Managers should exhibit qualities of leaders and world class managers (e.g. be proactive, calm and composed, listening etc.). In the case of behavioral qualities, 25 qualities are included using a semantic differential technique.

Defining Star Performers

Star Performers are basically those individuals who have a high performance record in a consistent manner over the years, (usually 2 or 3), and as such demonstrate potential to take on more responsibility and thus keep growing. Organizations have their own definitions and eligibility criterion for identifying star performers.

For the purpose of this study, star performers were identified by the CEO of the company along with the HR Chief and they provided information to the researcher. The assessment was based on the performance appraisal reports including the actual performance of the candidate as assessed by the CEO. Each CEO was requested to classify the performers into three categories A, B and C category performers. It is fair to call category A as Star Performers, B as Above Average Performers and C as Average Performers as most CEOs deny that they have any 'poor performers' in the Top Management.



Research Process and Coverage

360 Degree Feedback profiles were prepared for the senior management teams from six organizations. The participants and their respective assessors were oriented through an initial interaction session. Anonymous feedback was obtained based on the RSDQ model of leadership.

The Highlights Of The Process Followed For The Study Was As Follows:

- ✓ Across the 6 organizations, there were a total of 97 participants who were assessed by close to a thousand manager-assessors.
- ✓ Anonymous feedback was received directly through mail and converted to digital data in order to generate each individual's feedback profile.
- ✓ Post the completion of profile distribution, the HR chief of each company was requested, along with the CEO or MD, to divide the batch into three sets of groups or rather; to identify the star or fast track performers. The remaining participants would be assumed to be broadly classified as Average performers (this classification included Above Average, Average performers and low performers)

The results were based on a total of 447 assessments of 51 Star Performers and 289 assessments of 26 Average Performers

The Findings-A Summary

Results of the study indicated the following:

In four of the six organizations, star performers were rated as performing a number of managerial and leadership roles better or higher than the rest. In the Public Sector Units (PSUs), star performers and average performers were not very distinctly/clearly differentiated, through ratings in Roles or otherwise.

There was no significant difference between the Leadership Styles of Star Performers and Average Performers in any of the organizations. Leadership style therefore does not bring out much difference and should not be used independently, but in combination with other tools, depending on the purpose.

However, Star Performers were found to create higher degrees of job satisfaction and learning than average performers. Star performers tend to focus more on creating loyalty for the organization through personal loyalty for them.

While low and average performers use the same leadership style, they are not able to sustain or develop an atmosphere congenial to learning and experimentation.

Where delegation was concerned, surprisingly, Star and Average performers, both were found to be delegating more or less equally. In a few cases, contrary to expectations, average and low performers outperformed the stars in delegation.

The following qualities differentiated Star performers from average performers in 3 of the organizations:

- a) Generally takes a positive approach
- b) Organized and systematic
- c) Creates development opportunities for others

To Conclude :

The results of the study were not in the expected direction as far as the 'Leadership Styles' was concerned. It may be concluded from this study that Leadership Styles is not always a differentiating factor. However, on the whole it can be said that star performers use as much of benevolent, critical and developmental styles as do average performers. It is better to focus on the leadership activities and roles in developing leadership capabilities through 360 degree feedback.

